

AN
 Impartial State
 OF THE
 LATE DIFFERENCE
 Amongst the
Protestant Dissenting
 MINISTERS
 AT
SALTERS-HALL.

WITH
 Observations, Proposals, and Per-
 swasives for ACCOMMODATION.

L O N D O N :

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M I N I S T E R S, &c.



F Contention shall proceed amongst Dissenting Ministers and People, will it not be *Bitterness in the latter End*? Where Animosities about Religious Matters are kept up, Religion itself is in Danger to

languish, if it be not lost. And a divided Interest must be weakned, and is in the Way to be ruined. If Oil be flowing in from every Quarter, does it not require all Hands, that can do any thing, to suppress and quench the growing Flame ?

No *Conciliatory Measures* seem so likely to take, as that of *Scipio*, which pacify'd the *Roman* Army. He gave to each Side a Mural Crown, when both appeared to have such Pretensions to it as were dangerous, and hard to be decided. — Both Sides in the present Difference may have what they claim, not only without Damage, but with great Advantage to the whole Dissenting Interest ; and neither can fairly be deny'd it, while the Case stands thus ;

The Ministers on the one Side dreaded the Growth of *Arianism*, and other pernicious Errors relating to the Trinity and Deity of our Saviour, and were for
doing

doing every thing to prevent it, which they thought justifiable. The other Ministers had a Dread, lest any Breach should be made on Justice, Charity, or Christian Liberty, in opposing *Arian*, or other Errors, which usually gives Advantage to the Erroneous, and is a Scandal and Damage to Christianity.

The Ministers on one hand apprehended a Subscription of such *Humane Words* as might most directly meet with and convict the Erroneous was, in the present State of Things, a necessary Method to obviate the Danger : The other Ministers thought a Declaration in the strongest and clearest *Words of Scripture*, would be at once more safe, and more effectual for that Purpose.

The Ministers on the one Part withdrew, and subscrib'd the *Articles* and *Answers* they had pitch'd upon, as what they believ'd all or the Generality would come into : The Ministers on the other
Part

Part first went thro' with the *Advices*, and subscrib'd 'em, taking 'em to be such as all might fall in with; — and after made a *Declaration* against *Arianism*, and for the *Trinity*, and *proper Divinity* of our Saviour, referring to the *Scripture-Account* of both, which 'tis like they'll give more particularly in due Season; — They also added, that they were far from condemning any, who should appear to be with them in the main, though they should choose to declare only in *Scripture-Words*, or not in *theirs*.

Lastly, The Ministers on both sides chose Managers, in order to restore a good Understanding; — — They met several Times, but were not so happy as to accomplish the desired Peace — This is the Case, as Justice and Charity oblige us to believe —

Now, there are several *Observations* justly to be made, which may calm and
con-

conciliate the Minds of all on this Occasion.

Every sensible and considerate Man may see that the Principles, on which both Sides acted, were unquestionably good : So far therefore the Contention must be look'd upon as no worse than that which happen'd between *Paul* and *Barnabas*, *Acts* xv. 36, &c.

Again, there are few who know well what belongs to Thinking, but will allow, that each Side might have, and may continue to have, their Minds so filled with the Necessity and Importance of their own Principles, that they have not yet Room or Liberty to advert to the Necessity and Importance of theirs on the other side ; so that hitherto the Difference is but as that which happen'd betwixt *Job* and his three Friends, — Where their Minds on both Hands were fill'd with good Principles and Appre-
hen-

hensions, but they could not agree in applying them, 'till God humbled them all; and so brought the Difference to an happy Issue.

Farther yet, Matters of Expediency in Conduct are of such a Nature, that Men of equal Capacity and Integrity may be determin'd this Way or that, by Reasons on either side, whilst they have 'em not all at once before them to be weigh'd one against another, and are not in a convenient Scituation of Leisure, Retirement, and Sedateness, to weigh 'em with Exactness: And being once engag'd on either side, cannot do it easily, or speedily, if ever. *Peter* and *Paul* differ'd about the Expediency of conversing freely with the *Gentile-Christians*, as well as with the *Jewish*, in a particular Juncture, insomuch that *Paul* withstood *Peter* to the Face, *Gal. ii. 11, &c.* who yet we find speaks of him, as a beloved Brother, that had peculiar Wisdom given to him, *2 Pet. iii. 15.*

As

As an humbling Instance of humane Imperfection in our present State, God sometimes permits good Men should fall short in their Regards to one good thing, whilst they somewhat exceed in their Concern for another : And sometimes again by Mistake, so to think of others, or to be thought of so themselves : Tho' they do not by Principle allow themselves in any Error or Extream.

They are therefore to be the easier born with on all Hands : Especially since God may see it needful there should be such Occasions for the Exercise and Improvement of Christian Forbearance ; a Virtue so beneficial to the Church and to the World : and that He uses Men so differing to be a Guard and Check upon each other, as in the present Case, that neither Truth on one Hand, nor Charity on the other, may be lost or suffer.

B

Some-

Somewhat that may help to clear up this Matter, may be seen in the Difference that fell out betwixt *Israel* and *Judah*.

Judah had such a Sort of Regard for the House of *David*, as appears to have made 'em too little concern'd for the Liberties of the People : And *Israel*, on the other Hand, had such a kind of Concern for the Liberties of the People, as appears to have made them somewhat wanting in their Regards to the House of *David*.—Now, had *Judah* said, We are for the Liberties of the People as well as you, tho' not in such a Manner ; and *Israel* said, We are for the Royalty of the House of *David* as well as you, tho' not altogether in your Way.— And both said, Let us then use such Endeavours, as each can be satisfy'd in, to secure the one and the other, and had gone and done accordingly, the Throne of *David*, and the Liberties

ties of the People, yea and Religion too had stood together ; and only evil and dividing Counsellors had been deserted.

The Prosecution of differing Measures by the Ministers supposing, as Charity obliges, each thought their Method to be right, was so far commendable, that it was perform'd with Resolution, and maintain'd with Steadiness. Each Side easily saw they should meet with Reflections and Trouble not inconsiderable, from those who did, or would espouse the other. And yet both were for hazarding such Consequences, rather than make Shipwreck of a good Conscience, or do what they could not be satisfy'd in. Men of truly great Minds will embrace each other, tho' differing in some of their Apprehensions. And should not Protestant Dissenting Ministers, with their Adherents, aspire to a Temper and Behaviour so divine ?

Lastly, The Persons in this State of the Case are of such Characters and Principles, that it would be strangely unaccountable for the *Dissenters*, as their Numbers and Circumstances are, to reject, discourage, or discountenance any of them.

When such important Doctrines as the *Divinity* of our *Saviour* and the *Holy Spirit* are struck at, or undermin'd, should they not retain and encourage all who give substantial Evidence, tho' not just in the same Way, that they are heartily for maintaining and promoting them ?

When the *Scriptures* are rejected by some, dis-esteemed and neglected by many, and too little regarded or depended on by more ; Shall the Dissenters, who profess the highest Veneration for 'em, admit an Aversion or Coldness towards any amongst themselves that are for their
Suffi-

Sufficiency, their Authority, their enlightning and converting Efficacy, and have shew'd themselves ready to suffer, as well as plead for them ?

When there is such a Spirit of *Opposition* to that *Christian Liberty*, which the Dissenters have been taught to value by the Want of it ; and whilst some are watching to wrest from them, or straiten what they enjoy of it at present, shall they any way lessen the Number, or weaken the Hands of those who appear for its Defence in any fit Way, whether it be more or less observable ?

When *Charity* is at so low an Ebb, even amongst those, who have been Brethren in Affliction, and have suffer'd so much in common by uncharitable Censures, and other ill Treatment ; can they spare, or shall they discountenance any who studiously maintain, and seriously profess, and endeavour to promote it ? Should not their Light so shine in this
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heavenly Virtue, that all may be drawn to admire and follow it ?

And what if the Dissenting Ministers are divided ? Surely their Wound is not incurable. May it not with good Hope, as well as Reason, be *propos'd*, that some amongst them on each Side be so kind to themselves, their Brethren, and the People, as to give it in a Line or two under their Hands,

I. That the *State of the Difference* contained in this Paper is, at least in the Main, impartial, just and charitable, in their Apprehension.

II. That some Things are herein offered, which they earnestly desire, and hope may, by the Blessing of God, revive, and confirm *brotherly Love and good Correspondence* amongst all the Ministers and People, and prevail with them to admit, that those of each Side may, with-

without Censure or Reflection from the other, pursue such lawful Methods of maintaining Truth and Peace, wherein they can be satisfy'd.

III. That they themselves will, by Divine Assistance, use their best Endeavours to promote such a Coalition, as is here propos'd.

May God the Father, Son and Spirit, the God of Order, Peace, and Love, who has all Hearts in his Hand, incline all unfeignedly to come into these or some like Measures, without which there is little or no Prospect of an happy Agreement, amongst Dissenting Protestants !

It is also much to be desir'd, and therefore earnestly recommended,

That the Ministers would all carefully watch against any Thing reflecting on
their

their Brethren or their Conduct in this Affair, both in their publick Ministrations, and private Converse.

That they wou'd take all proper Occasions to signify to the People, that there was nothing done amongst the Ministers, for which they may be justly charg'd, either as being unfound in the Faith, or of an imposing and persecuting Spirit.

That they use their Interest and Influence with the People, that they would abstain from Reflections and Suspicions, on Account of the late Difference amongst the Ministers; that notwithstanding this, they would esteem and encourage their Ministry; and also, that without their Censure or Reflection, they would allow all to pursue the lawful Methods of maintaining Truth and Peace, in which they can be satisfy'd.

Lastly,

Lastly, That the Converse and Behaviour both of Ministers and People on each Side may be with the usual Marks of Respect and Friendship, and a Readiness to serve each other in Love.

Now according to the *State* before given, the late Difference among the Ministers at *Salter's-Hall*, is no just Bar to their *Claim* of being accounted sound in the Faith, sincere in their Charity, and real Friends to Christian Liberty. And according to the *Proposals* here, this *Claim* is granted by every One who consents to them; and makes it appear that he really does so. Who sees not that such a *signal Instance of Moderation and Charity*, must greatly tend to the *Honour and Security* of the whole Dissenting Interest?

To close the whole. What shall be farther said to persuade and prevail with the Ministers to come into such Measures? Don't *they* know, that *a Kingdom, City, or House divided against it self, cannot*
C *stand,*

stand, but is brought to Desolation? (Mat. xii. 25.) That when the *Jews*, in the Time of *Vespasian*, fell into Sects and Parties, the *Romans* came and took away both their *Place and Nation*. That in an Army of wise and faithful Soldiers, when engaged against a Common Enemy, one Part will not fall upon the other, or desert them, merely because they are for Differing Ways in making their Attacks? When the Vessel has sprung a dangerous Leak, shall not all be encouraged to do their best, tho' in differing Methods, to prevent the Sea's coming in upon and sinking them: If some of those be more effectual, may not all be serviceable in one Degree or other? Engines and Buckets of differing Make and Sizes, will be readily admitted and imploy'd to quench a Fire.

Shall one Member of our Saviour's Body say to another, *I have no need of thee*, 1 Cor. xii. 21. yea tho' it were the Right Hand to the Left? Are not both to be

be employ'd to fence and guard against a Stroke, that's levell'd at the Head, and to bind up the Wounds which threaten a Dissolution or grievous Damage to the Body ?

Is not all help needful for the important Service which Ministers are engaged in, not only against *Flesh and Blood*, and the *cunning Craftiness of Men*, whereby they lie in wait to deceive ; but against *Principalities and Powers*, and the *Rulers of the Darknes of this World*, who are not divided one Part against another ; and shall Ministers of the Gospel of Peace content themselves to be and to continue so ; when the whole Force, *which every Joint* however closely *compact*ed can supply, is evidently all too little by it self ? Nor is the God of Peace and Love so likely to be with them in their divided State : How then shall they, and *the Weapons of their Warfare*, be mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong-holds : Casting down *Imaginations*, and every high Thing that

exalteth it self against the Knowledge of God, and bringing into Captivity every Thought to the Obedience of Christ, 2 Cor. x. 4, 5.

Does it not highly concern both Sides to come into some such Agreement as may take off the Reproach of such a Difference? And it seems now in a manner necessary to make out and confirm their *Claim* to the Character before, which is of such Importance to the Honour, and Success of their Ministry.

Both Sides aver they are Sound in the Faith; but without an Agreement; will there not be too much Colour given to the World to say, are either of them so, if they are to be known by their Fruits, *Mat. vii. 16, &c.* They are saying, 'tis true, *Lord, Lord*, but do not the Things he so much insists upon. Where are those *Fruits of the Spirit, Love — Peace, Long-suffering, Gentleness, Goodness, Faith, and Meekness*; against which there is no Law, (*Gal. v. 22, 23, 24.*) nor can it be well imagin'd, there should be any, in a Case
of

of this Nature. Such Fruits as these would reconcile 'em, and shew them plainly to be Christ's Disciples, *John* xiii. 34, 35.

Both Sides affirm, they are against Imposition and Persecution: But if the Difference shall not be made up, it's greatly to be fear'd too many will say, must WE believe their Words against their Deeds, when they draw and continue one upon another undeserv'd Suspicion, Censure, Contempt, and other Hardships that attend upon such kind of Divisions; when they might deliver one another from them, by what is so easy to be done, and so plainly due from each to the other, to the Churches of Christ, and to the World about them? ——— If either Side should reject such like Methods, for the clearing of their Brethren, will they not in a while be taken to accuse 'em? Especially where things have been done on both Hands, which insinuate a Charge.

But

But shall any be justify'd and confirm'd in saying, the Dissenters will not bear ev'n with one another, in taking the lawful differing Ways for maintaining *Truth and Peace*, wherein they can be satisfy'd? And this by their not agreeing with a *Proposal*, wherein such a thing as this is mov'd, to save the *whole* from the Oppression that sooner or later will in all Probability come upon 'em from such an Apprehension of 'em, if it shall once be taken for a certain Truth. — — Every one will cry, we must take Care of these People to keep them under, for what Work will they make with those that are not of them, who are so severe upon one another?

It would be strange, if Ministers should not be aware, that since Division does in all Mens Opinion manifestly tend towards Dissolution, it must naturally dispose Persons of greater Caution, or more Eminence, to withdraw from Dissenters, as
Men

Men are wont to do from an House, whose Breaches or Clefts give an Apprehension of its being like to fall.

And it would be stranger still, if the same Ministers should not, from such a Consideration, hasten to repair the Breaches, which at present appear to all observing Eyes in the Dissenting Interest, by some such Agreement as is here propos'd.

If Congregations should be reduc'd, by the Desertion of some of their principal Members or Hearers, those who remain wou'd find it more difficult to maintain their Standing; and when they should feel themselves press'd, might be apt to fly from what they could not easily bear; and others would be probably kept back from coming, or fixing among those, whom they would observe to be visibly declining, and this by Occasion of a faulty and scandalous Deficiency in Christian

stian Prudence or good Temper, or of both together.

Will it not also be consider'd, that the Legislature at present look upon the Dissenters, as agreed in an hearty Concern for Civil Rights, as well as for Religious Liberties : But if they should continue to be divided about these, and grow into a settled Estrangement one from another ; any one may see that as it will change their Thoughts of 'em ; so it must in all Probability alter their Regards to 'em ; how much for the better may be left to any Man to guess—

The Ministers of the *several Denominations* have cultivated a mutual Friendship and good Correspondence, under the differing Sentiments which they are known to maintain ; this, their Observation and Experience tell them, has been to the Honour of Religion, to their mutual Comfort and Advantage, and in some Measure also to the publick Good : Shall a Difference about Expediency hold them
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divided, whom Differences of an higher Nature could not hinder from uniting as to Things that concern 'em in common, nor for so long interrupt 'em in that Union? Shall they not, by the Divine Assistance, easily surmount the lesser Difficulty, who have so far overcome the greater?

Ministers well know, that the *Romans* won Hearts, as well as Countries, by their Tender Regard, and liberal Indulgence to the Civil and Religious Liberties of Nations. They are fully appriz'd, That the *Apostles* of our Lord were inspir'd, and conducted to give Judgment for Liberty, as to all Things about Religion, but such as the *Holy Ghost* declar'd to be *Necessary*; and to command all Christians to stand fast in *that Liberty*, since *Christ* hath so far made 'em free.

Did the *Romans* in this Way win Hearts, and the *Apostles* in this Way convert Souls? What shall keep the Ministers then from falling in with and promoting

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moting that Part of the Proposal to the best of their Power, That they will, without their Censure and Reflection, allow Men to take those lawful Methods for maintaining Truth and Peace which they can be satisfy'd in?

The Ministers have instructed us, That the *Body of Christ*, of which they are Members, as well as Keepers, must be *fitly joyned and compacted* in order to its *Increase*, and the *Edifying itself in Love*; sure then, *They* can never content themselves to let it lie divided thro' a Neglect to allow, what the Scriptures require? for every Man — *i. e.* the Liberty mention'd before.

Ministers are charg'd to be *Examples to the Believers in Charity and Spirit*, and also *in Faith and Purity*: When they are endeavouring to be Examples in these latter, will they not shew themselves such also in the former? Especially when there is so pressing an Occasion for it?

Some

Some Ministers have told their Hearers of Two excellent Commanders, who fell at Variance; but being order'd to go upon an Expedition against the Common Enemy, they agreed to lay aside their Differences, till the War should be over. And will not they themselves lay by their Differences *about Expediency*, who have a War upon their Hands against the fallen Angels and their Party, and know there's a great deal depends upon their managing it well? They know while they are contending about the best Way of Acting against those Enemies, *These* are with all Application acting against them: While they are disputing, the *ravenous Lion* is destroying. They certainly will resolve to let Parties rather go out in any likely Way against the Enemy, Then let 'em engage one against another about the Methods wherein they shall attack him, and so make way for his coming in amongst 'em, and gaining great Advantage over them. Satan can stir up Ministers, as once

he did by *David*, even Ministers of Christ, to cry this, or that is not to be born, shall never be so— What! the Deity of our Saviour not asserted? What! the Scripture undervalu'd? Come muster up your Forces on each Side; and stand it out with Resolution, against those who either flight or betray *their Saviour*, says one Side: *Their Bible*, says the other.

Ay, but Ministers know, that *the Wrath of Man, worketh not the Righteousness of God*. Can they be suppos'd ignorant of the *Wicked One's* Devices? Will not they, after the Example of their Lord, say, *Get thee behind us Satan*; thou wouldst have us exalt Christ and his Word in such a Way as will really prove to the Dishonour and Detriment of both. We are oblig'd to stand by both *i. e.* for the Deity of our Saviour, and the Perfection of our Bibles: But we are to learn, how to stand by 'em, from 'em both. Let us obey; that's of more Importance than Sacrifice: Let us hearken; that is preferable to the Fat of Rams: Let us
hear

hear JESUS, the Wonderful Counsellour,
the Mighty GOD, on this Occasion. He
stille the Blustring of the Winds, and
Raging of the Seas. And thus they'll
find themselves dispos'd to imbrace the
offer'd Mediation. For,

These Divines who are *mighty in the
Scriptures* will hear their beloved Lord
saying, *Come, pass not rash Judgment on
either Hand*, If you do I and my
Words condemn you both. What
Ground have you on either Hand for
any black Imputations? My Order is,
*Above all Things have fervent Charity a-
mongst yourselves*, 1 Pet. iv. 8. This is a
Matter of the highest Importance, clear
one another of wicked Slanders, who
are all of you ready to clear yourselves
as far, and as fast as ever you can:
my Order is, *Love Your Neighbour as your-
selves*, Mark xii. 31. much more your
*Brethren and Companions in my Kingdom
and Patience*. You, my Ambassadors,
cannot have *all Men know ye are, so much
as my Disciples*, if you don't show it by
loving

loving one another, John xiii. 35. And where's your Proof of this Love, if you wont come into reasonable Methods of Accommodation? Come, you have *My Supper*, the Holy *Sacrament* drawing nigh, will you not take Care to be *reconciled* one to another before you bring *your Gift to the Altar*, or offer it there? *Matth. v. 23, 24.*

The Ministers on the one Hand will remember how they have taken up with *Scripture-Declarations* themselves once and again at *Ordinations*. And how in the Counties of *Westmorland* and *Worcestershire* together with those adjoining, their worthy Ancestors contented themselves with a Declaration of Faith drawn up in *Scripture Words*: The Ministers on the other side will remember many Churches of Christ have made Confessions of Faith in *human Words*, and that they themselves have signed one, tho' they would not have chosen some Expressions in it: And thus both Sides will more easily come together in Peace and Love again.

Mini-

Ministers will pray for the Peace of *Jerusalem*, and to be sure then they'll watch and labour for it to their Power. They believe those shall Prosper that love Her; what can they think will become of those that hate Her; That hate her so far as to neglect doing what they might to have Peace within her Walls, and Prosperity within her Palaces. This Persuasion also will quicken 'em to come into peaceful Measures in spite of all Pretences, Excuses, and Reasonings to delay or to neglect it.

But if all this should prove a Dream, and Ministers prove indolent, and People negligent to stir 'em up; if they shall raise Difficulties instead of passing by or breaking thro' 'em and so Peace shall fail to be re-established,

It will be said, They only, or how ever plainly shew themselves to be true and genuine Fathers in the Church, who to preserve it from being divided and
destroy'd

destroy'd are ready to deny themselves, in somewhat which they greatly desire ; and to fall in with something which they could not otherwise bear. By such Marks as these King *Solomon* discern'd betwixt the pretended Mother of the Child, and real one, 1 *Kings* iii. 16, &c.

It is dreadful to think how many may be in Danger to stumble and fall into Perdition, should they see that the Ministers refuse or neglect to come to a Reconciliation. Many will be led to think that neither the one side heartily believe the Divinity of their Saviour nor the other the Authority of the Scriptures ; tho' all of 'em lay so strong a Claim to the Belief of both. For if they did, they wou'd certainly more regard Him in what he there declares, and enjoins with Relation to such Matters. But better Things, are hop'd, and believed of those who bear such Characters.

F I N I S.



